

Refugees Misdirected: How Information, Misinformation, and Rumors Shape Refugees' Access to Fundamental Rights

MELISSA CARLSON, LAURA JAKLI, KATERINA LINOS*

The global refugee regime represents one of the few generous commitments governments offer to outsiders. Indeed, few persons fleeing armed conflict actually claim international protection upon first arriving in Europe, even though the benefits of legal protection are significant. Displaced persons' decisions to remain informal is particularly puzzling in light of the risks it entails; these include lack of access to food and housing and possible abuse by smugglers. Existing theories highlight bureaucratic obstacles and push-pull factors, such as attractive onward destinations, to explain the significant gap between formal protections and actual rights access. However, in environments of high uncertainty, decisions to apply for asylum and exercise rights depend critically on information, misinformation, and rumors. We argue that asylum seekers underutilize legal pathways because limited and biased information leads them to distrust government authorities and aid organizations, and increasingly trust smugglers. To assess these claims, we use mixed methods, and combine ethnographic and interview-based research with data drawn from anonymous online rumor trackers.¹

* University of California, Berkeley.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The global refugee regime represents one of the few generous commitments governments offer to outsiders.² International law requires all governments not to turn away refugees to danger. This obligation, enshrined in refugee treaties and in international custom, is termed “nonrefoulement.”³ This core obligation to refugees is open-ended: quantitative limits governments routinely set in other realms, such as caps on development aid or technical assistance, are not permissible vis-à-vis nonrefoulement.⁴

European and national laws detail and expand upon international legal protections for refugees and other displaced persons. EU member states must guarantee that all persons who reach EU states can effectively exercise their rights to claim international protection without undue obstacles. In particular, EU member states must provide legal and procedural information in the language of the applicant,⁵ must allow applicants to seek legal assistance,⁶ and must allow applicants to appeal negative decisions.⁷ In addition, international protection applicants are entitled to housing, food, and clothing⁸ as well as healthcare,⁹ and schooling for minor children within three months of arrival.¹⁰ Applicants granted refugee status and other types of international protection obtain immediate access to the workforce, among many other benefits.¹¹

² See generally Eyal Benvenisti, *Sovereigns as Trustees of Humanity: On the Accountability of States to Foreign Stakeholders*, 107 AM. J. INT'L L. 295 (2013).

³ See generally T. Alexander Aleinikoff, *International Legal Norms and Migration: A Report*, in MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL NORMS, 1–27 (T. Alexander Aleinikoff & Vincent Chetail eds., 2003).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Establishing the Criteria and Mechanisms for Determining the Member State Responsible for Examining an Application for International Protection Lodged in One of the Member States by a Third-country National or a Stateless Person (recast), 2013 O.J. (L 180) 31, [*hereinafter* Dublin Regulation] at Art. 4; Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on Common Procedures for Granting and Withdrawing International Protection (recast), 2013 O.J. (L 180) 60, [*hereinafter* Asylum Procedures Directive] at Art. 12; Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Laying Down Standards for the Reception of Applicants for International Protection, 2013 O.J. (L 180) 96, [*hereinafter* Reception Conditions Directive] at Art. 5.

⁶ Asylum Procedures Directive, *supra* note 5, at Art. 8(2), 19–23.

⁷ Asylum Procedures Directive, *supra* note 5, at Art. 8(2), 19–23 (noting that, on request in appeals procedures member states must provide free legal assistance to those who lack sufficient resources).

⁸ Reception Conditions Directive, *supra* note 5, at Art. 17.

⁹ *Id.* at Art. 19.

¹⁰ *Id.* at Art. 14.

¹¹ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on Standards for the Qualification of Third-country Nationals or Stateless Persons as Beneficiaries of International Protection, for a Uniform Status for Refugees or for Persons Eligible for Subsidiary

To enjoy these protections, applicants for international protection must begin the application process in a particular member state—usually their country of first arrival—even if they intend to relocate elsewhere.¹² In 2015, over 830,000 vulnerable migrants successfully crossed the Mediterranean to Greece.¹³ Yet, fewer than 5% applied for asylum and other forms of protection in this first European haven.¹⁴ Asylum seekers' decision to remain informal until they reach their intended destination country is particularly puzzling in light of the risks this decision entails. Maintaining an informal status makes it harder to access critical services, such as primary health care, food, and shelter; it also increases the probability of arrest and deportation.

Why do displaced persons remain informally in Greece, rather than apply for formal protection? And why do displaced persons seeking resettlement in Northern Europe assume the risks of smuggling when legal resettlement pathways are available? More broadly, why do displaced persons selectively exercise their legal rights? Existing theories highlight bureaucratic obstacles and push-pull factors, such as attractive onward destinations, to explain the significant gap between formal refugee protections and actual rights access. Complex national bureaucracies, staffed by front-line workers who sometimes make arbitrary decisions, are often blamed for long delays.¹⁵ In addition, countries with more favorable working conditions are thought to attract asylum seekers away from initial points of entry.¹⁶ These factors, while informative, cannot provide comprehensive explanations for *how* and *when* individuals decide to apply for asylum. Similarly, these literatures ignore the process by which asylum seekers weigh costs and benefits, and how uncertainty influences their ability to adjudicate between available options. We know little about how refugees

Protection, and for the Content of the Protection Granted Art. 3, 2011 O.J. (L 337) 9, [*hereinafter* Qualification Directive] at Art. 26.

12 See Dublin Regulation, *supra* note 5 (regulating the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection); Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 Establishing Provisional Measures in the Area of International Protection for the Benefit of Italy and Greece, 2015 O.J. (L 248) 80, (setting up a temporary relocation plan).

13 Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response—Mediterranean, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2015), <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83>.

14 Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015, EUROSTAT NEWS RELEASE (Mar. 4, 2016), <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/>.

15 See ALISON MOUNTZ, *SEEKING ASYLUM: HUMAN SMUGGLING AND BUREAUCRACY AT THE BORDER* (2010); CAROL BOHMER & AMY SHUMAN, *REJECTING REFUGEES: POLITICAL ASYLUM IN THE 21ST CENTURY* (2007); Loren Landau & Karen Jacobsen, *Refugees in the New Johannesburg*, 19 FORCED MIGRATION REV. 44 (2004); Jonas Hansson et al., *Police Officers' Use of Discretion in Forced Repatriations of Unaccompanied, Asylum-seeking Refugee Children: Balancing Efficiency and Dignity*, 3 INT'L J. SOC. WORK & HUM. SERV. PRAC. 101 (2015); Adam Saltsman, *Beyond the Law: Power, Discretion, and Bureaucracy in the Management of Asylum Space in Thailand*, 27 J. REFUGEE STUD. 457 (2014).

16 See E.F. Kunz, *The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement*, 7 INT'L MIGRATION REV. 125 (1973); Susan Zimmerman, *Why Seek Asylum? The Roles of Integration and Financial Support*, 48 INT'L MIGRATION 199 (2009).

collect, perceive, and sort through information as they make these critical decisions.

We argue that displaced persons' decisions to apply for asylum and exercise their legal rights is directly influenced by how they access and interpret information about available options. Migrants and refugees actively engage with information about possible choices to make informed decisions. The content of the information they receive, the source that delivers this information, and how often this information is repeated directly influence how migrants perform cost-benefit analysis. We develop a theoretical explanation that captures how displaced persons collect information and use it to inform their decision-making.

Our theoretical focus on displaced persons' engagement with information highlights the role that uncertainty, access, misperception, and misinformation play in decision-making. Limited and poorly-communicated information can lead asylum seekers to interpret government and aid organizations' policies as discriminatory or motivated by self-interest. Similarly, our theoretical framework demonstrates how wildly-inaccurate rumors can still influence refugee decision-making and spread across refugee communities. Whereas natives and long-term residents often perceive official sources as most credible,¹⁷ our research shows that asylum seekers frequently discount these sources as questionable and biased. Instead, asylum seekers turn to unofficial sources, which they perceive as more reliable and consistent. In addition to source credibility, migrants and refugees sometimes believe rumors because they hope they are accurate, as the literature on motivated reasoning suggests. Similarly, migrants and refugees may believe inaccurate rumors if they help explain frustrating or unclear phenomena.¹⁸

As we demonstrate, rumors influence many aspects of migrant and refugee decision making at each leg of their journey, including the decision to apply for asylum and other protections, move from formal to informal settlements (and vice versa), seek out public services (such as healthcare), and move northwards via the official reunification process or through smugglers. The fact that several non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") across Europe track and debunk false rumors illustrates rumors' influence in refugee decision-making.¹⁹

17 See Chanthika Pornpitakpan, *The Persuasiveness of Source Credibility: A Critical Review of Five Decades' Evidence*, 34(2) J. APPLIED SOC. PSYCHOL. 243 (2004).

18 Interview with aid organization worker 16, in Attica, Greece (June 20, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 18, in Attica, Greece (June 24, 2016).

19 As elaborated more below, Internews, a nongovernmental organization working on the Greek refugee crisis response, actively provides refugees information about the asylum application process, as well as tracks and dispels rumors about Greek government policies.

We focus our research in Greece, which serves as the main entry point of asylum seekers into Europe.²⁰ Although initially understood as a transit country, Greece will likely host tens of thousands of migrants for the long term.²¹ Moreover, asylum application rates in Greece have been particularly depressed and volatile,²² providing a compelling context to identify phenomena that lead to irregular asylum application rates.

To assess our theoretical explanations, we conducted extensive ethnographic research with internet-based technologies. Specifically, we conducted twenty-five interviews with government and aid organization representatives involved in the Greek refugee crisis response during the summer of 2016. We also conducted over eighty interviews with refugees and migrants and extensive participant observation in formal and informal refugee camps and detention centers in Attica and Lesbos.²³ Appendix A details where and when we conducted these interviews and participant observations. To demonstrate broad trends in rumor content, we also conducted content analysis of specialized rumor databases that map rumors concerning the asylum process, formal and informal onward transit options, and the relationship between legal status and access to basic rights.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we outline existing literature that posits explanations for why vulnerable migrants may not exercise their legal rights. Specifically, we highlight push-pull factors and bureaucratic obstacles that contribute to an explanation but fail to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding refugees' behaviors. Furthermore, we expand the literature from a focus on the decision-making processes of economic migrants to asylum seekers facing humanitarian crises. We argue that information gathering and processing is quite distinct in the later context. Next, we outline our theoretical claims. As we describe in the subsequent methodology section, we examine our theories using semi-structured interviews, ethnographic research, as well as content analysis. We describe our findings and conclude.

II. EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

Existing scholarship on asylum seekers' decision-making processes can be grouped into two general categories: bureaucratic obstacles and push-pull factors. In the following sections, we expand on these two factors, and then

20 See UNHCR Fact Sheet—GREECE, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (May 2017), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58264>.

21 Anthony Faiola, *'We're Never Getting Out of Here': How Refugees Became Stranded in Greece*, The Washington Post (Oct. 14, 2016), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/were-never-getting-out-of-here-how-refugees-became-stranded-in-greece/2016/10/14/86720b56-8a51-11e6-8cdc-4fbb1973b506_story.html?utm_term=.d8b8f1818630.

22 See Asylum Statistics 2016, ASYLUM SERVICE, http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Greek-Asylum-Service-statistical-data_December2016_gr.pdf. Statistics on the Old Procedure provided by the Appeals Committees PD 114/2010.

23 Attica is the largest region in Greece, where over 40 percent of the population lives.

move on to explain our contribution to the literature on information access. The current literature on information access focuses on economic migrants and their plight, preliminarily examining remittances and job seeking. We expect rumor transmission to operate differently in crisis contexts.

A. Displaced Persons' Decision to Apply for Asylum: Bureaucratic Obstacles and Push-Pull Factors

Scholars argue that bureaucratic obstacles, mainly complex and unwieldy government bureaucracy and arbitrary decisions by lower-level bureaucrats, can prevent refugees from initiating or completing the asylum application process.²⁴ Arbitrary decision-making by law enforcement and other 'street-level' bureaucrats is particularly problematic; often, local-level authorities' preconceived notions of which individuals qualify for humanitarian protection introduce significant biases in the asylum process via bureaucratic footholds.²⁵ Moreover, refugees face long processing times because even higher level officials can misinterpret what counts as persecution, question the credibility of asylum claims, apply policies arbitrarily, and strategically interpret laws in order to deter or deny asylum seekers.²⁶ Slow and complex bureaucracies can be particularly challenging for refugees who may not speak the host country language, lack formal documentation, and have limited access to translators.²⁷

The aforementioned bureaucratic obstacles can explain routine delays, frustrations, and the formation of bottlenecks. However, bureaucratic obstacles ebb and flow over time and are more pertinent in explaining frustrations in some parts of Greece than others. The literature on bureaucratic obstacles predicts delays and frustrations but not widespread distrust of both the state and the aid agencies. Moreover, it is not clear from prior work that these frustrations and delays can directly lead to illicit behavior and full-blown ethnic riots.

Scholars have also identified push-pull factors that lead refugees to move onwards from their initial entry point. Push-pull factors include lack of effective legal protection and rights access in theoretically 'safe' host countries, economic conditions and employment possibilities, violence and other risks due to political hostility, the prospect of family reunification elsewhere, fluctuating border controls, and individual migrants'

²⁴ See N. Burchett et al., *The Need for Belonging: The Impact of Restrictions on Working on the Well-being of an Asylum Seeker*, 17 J. OCCUPATIONAL SCI. 2 (2010); Jonathan S. Davies, *The Limits of Joined-up Government: Towards a Political Analysis*, 87 PUB. ADMIN. 1 (2009).

²⁵ Hansson et al., *supra* note 15; Saltsman, *supra* note 15.

²⁶ MOUNTZ, *supra* note 15; BOHMER & SHUMAN, *supra* note 15.

²⁷ *Id.*; Landau, *supra* note 15.

socioeconomic status.²⁸ Other theorized push-pull factors include educational prospects, geographic position of the destination country, proximity to countries of origin, and linguistic knowledge in destination countries.

While push-pull factors help explain why someone would rather live in Germany than in Greece, they cannot explain why an asylum seeker would choose to reach Germany through an informal rather than a formal route. We seek to understand when migrants and refugees employ formal rather than informal routes to reach their goals.

In turn, we argue that the ways in which asylum seekers engage with information in environments characterized by high levels of uncertainty and anxiety mediate the effect of bureaucratic obstacles and push-pull factors. We consider how asylum seekers draw from and seek out sources of varying legitimacy to make sense of the shifting crisis situation.

B. Information and Economic Migrants: Jobs and Remittances

Rumors have been shown to affect a variety of domains and behaviors, including economic stability, national security, and public health.²⁹ A substantial body of literature suggests that situations characterized by ambiguity and high anxiety, such as natural disasters or violent conflict, optimize the emergence and transmission of misinformation.³⁰ Nevertheless, we know little about rumors in the refugee context.

Rather, the literature on information and migrants focuses on economic migrants and their transnational networks. This literature demonstrates that economic migrants' connections with their homelands affect their behavior in host countries, specifically their decisions to send remittances.³¹ Since information flows relatively quickly through consolidated migrant networks, relatives may leverage a rumor about a migrant "misbehaving" to reduce access to the networks' services,³² both in the country of origin and

28 See K.T. Brewer & Deniz Yükeker, *A Survey on African Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Istanbul*, in *Land of diverse Migrations: Challenges of Emigration and Immigration in Turkey* (Ahmet İçduygu & Kemal Kirişçi eds., 2009); Franck Düvell, *Qualitative Research in Migration Studies*, CARIMEAST (2012), <http://www.carim-east.eu/media/CARIM-East-AS2012-01.pdf>; Ahmet İçduygu, *Transit Migration in Turkey: Trends, Patterns, and Issues*, CARIMEAST (2005).

29 See Ralph L. Rosnow, *Inside Rumor: A Personal Journey*, 46 *AM. PSYCHOLOGIST* 484 (1991).

30 See GARY ALAN FINE & RALPH L. ROSNOW, *RUMOR AND GOSSIP: THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF HEARSAY* (1976); Floyd Henry Allport & Milton Lepkin, *Wartime Rumors of Waste and Special Privilege: Why Some People Believe Them*, 40 *J. ABNORMAL & SOC. PSYCHOL.* 3 (1945); GORDON W. ALLPORT & LEO POSTMAN, *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RUMOR* (1947); Susan Anthony, *Anxiety and Rumor*, 89 *J. SOC. PSYCHOL.* 91 (1973); Rosnow, *supra* note 28; Adam J. Berinsky, *Rumors, Truths, and Reality: A Study of Political Misinformation* (May 22, 2012) (unpublished manuscript, on file with Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Political Science).

31 See Isabelle Chort et al., *Migrant Networks as a Basis for Social Control: Remittance Incentives among Senegalese in France and Italy*, 42 *REGIONAL SCI. & URB. ECON.* 858 (2012).

32 See Monica Boyd, *Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas*, 23 *INT'L MIGRATION REV.* 638 (1989); Douglas S. Massey et al., *Continuities in*

destination.³³ The threat of ostracism effectively compels many migrants to send remittances.³⁴

Conversely, this literature indicates that economic migrants also send (mis)information home to influence others' decision to migrate, strategically 'editing' their difficult experiences to make themselves appear successful or deliberately reporting lower earnings to relatives back home to provide disincentives for others to migrate.³⁵ The more integrated diaspora networks are in host communities, the more accurate information they provide about employment opportunities and conditions on the ground.³⁶ Age, social-economic status, employment status, and other living conditions can similarly constrain migrants' perceptions of quality of and access to various services in host states.³⁷

Existing literature on economic migrants also demonstrates their use of rumor to combat uncertainty within their host environments. Rumors help establish and perpetuate informal economic practices and moral hierarchies, serving as sources of information about opportunities for legal integration and informal employment.³⁸ Moreover, rumors influence how migrants perceive and understand the state, its functions, and its effectiveness.³⁹ This relationship leads them to avoid, circumvent, or 'play' the state. Even rumors that are blatantly false can sometimes outperform factual information or eyewitness accounts because they allow migrants to reassess

Transnational Migration: An Analysis of Nineteen Mexican Communities, 99 AM J. SOC. 1492 (1994). These authors find that migrant networks provide valuable forms of social capital; these networks assist migrants when traveling, facilitate their settlement in their destination country, access transportation, and find shelter and employment, among a variety of other forms of emotional and economic support. Collectively, these findings suggest that individuals considering migration, or engaging in migration, may have (misplaced) high levels of trust in diaspora networks, and may be willing to accept misinformation about conditions on the ground as truth.

³³ See *id.*

³⁴ See Chort, *supra* note 15; Hamidou Dia, *Les investissements des migrants dans la vallée du fleuve Sénégal: confiance et conflits d'intérêts*, 23 REVUE EUROPEENNE DES MIGRATIONS INTERNATIONALES 29 (2007).

³⁵ See PEGGY LEVITT, *THE TRANSNATIONAL VILLAGERS* (2001); SARAH J. MAHLER, *AMERICAN DREAMING: IMMIGRANT LIFE ON THE MARGINS* (1995); Will Somerville et al., *Pay-to-Go Schemes and Other Noncoercive Return Programs: Is Scale Possible?*, MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE (Apr. 2011); Gregory L. Pettys & Pallassana R. Balgopal, *Multigenerational Conflicts and New Immigrants: An Indo-American Experience*, 79 FAM. IN SOC. 410 (1998); DAVID VAN MOPPE & JORIS SCHAPENDONK, *MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS' ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES* (Migration and Development Series, Working Paper No. 18, Sept. 2007).

³⁶ See BENJAMIN ELSNER ET AL., *MIGRANT NETWORKS AND THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION* (EZA, Discussion Paper No. 7863, December 2013).

³⁷ See Lígia Moreira Almeida et al., *Migrant Women's Perceptions of Healthcare During Pregnancy and Early Motherhood: Addressing the Social Determinants of Health*, 16 J. IMMIGRANT & MINORITY HEALTH 719 (2014).

³⁸ See Nicholas DeMaria Harney, *Migrant Strategies, Informal Economies and Ontological Security: Ukrainians in Naples, Italy*, 32 INT'L J. SOC. & SOC. POL'Y 4 (2012).

³⁹ See Andrew Gardner, *Rumour and Myth in the Labour Camps of Qatar*, 28 ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY 25 (2012); Juan Ordonez, *Documents and Shifting Labor Environments Among Undocumented Migrant Workers in Northern California*, 37 ANTHROPOLOGY OF WORK REV. 24 (2016).

and process the power dynamic and asymmetric information between them and their host institutions.⁴⁰

Scholars also explain how rumors serve as guides for interacting with migrant groups of different ethnicities. Research suggests that gossip and rumors map onto in-group and out-group sources. Specifically, outsiders are excluded from participating in rumor circulation; within the “in-group,” individuals spread rumors in response to self or factional interests.⁴¹ First, the out-group may be attacked privately; over time, this may escalate to public confrontations or fights.⁴² Similarly, low information about an out-group and the ‘newness’ of the out-group contribute to the spread of negative (and false) information. Whether rumor content focuses on direct action, authentication of information, emotional coping, or building one group up while putting other groups down can have varying behavioral effects.⁴³

The limited scholarship that exists on migrant information flows overlooks the critical role that perceptions of credibility play, and how these perceptions influence whether they act on a piece of information or ignore it. Most importantly, existing research does not explain how information access and rumors influence asylum seekers’ decision to apply for asylum. We fill this gap by developing theoretical implications for how asylum seekers adjudicate between and weigh the value of different information sources. More broadly, by bringing rumors, and their influence on recipient decision making to the context of refugee crises, we fill a critical gap in our current understanding of rumor transmission and influence in refugee decision-making.

40 See Carolina Moulin, *Border Languages: Rumors and (Dis) Placements of (Inter) National Politics*, 35 ALTERNATIVES: GLOBAL, LOCAL, POLITICAL 4 (2010).

41 See Alejandro Paz, *The Circulation of Chisme and Rumor: Gossip, Evidentiality, and Authority in the Perspective of Latino Labor Migrants in Israel*, 19 J. LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY 117 (2009).

42 See KAREN J. BRISON, JUST TALK: GOSSIP, MEETINGS, AND POWER IN A PAPUA NEW GUINEA VILLAGE (1992); Donald Brenneis, *Grog and Gossip in Bhatgaon: Style and Substance in Fiji Indian Conversation*, 11 AM. ETHNOLOGIST 487 (1984); John Beard Haviland, *Gossip as Competition*, 27 J. COMM. 186 (1977); Sally Engle Merry, *Anthropology and the Study of Alternative Dispute Resolution*, 34 J. LEGAL EDUC. 277 (1984).

43 See ALLPORT & POSTMAN, *supra* note 29; Robert H. Knapp, *A Psychology of Rumor*, 8 PUB. OPINION Q. 22 (1944); Crystale Purvis Cooper et al., *Cancer Internet Search Activity on a Major Search Engine, United States 2001-2003*, 7 J. MEDICAL INTERNET RES. 36 (2005); Nicholas DiFonzo, et al., *Rumors About Cancer: Content, Sources, Coping, Transmission, and Belief*, 17 J. HEALTH COMM.: INT’L PERSP. 1099 (2012); Stephanie R. Kelley, *Rumors in Iraq a Guide to Winning Hearts and Minds* (diss., Naval Postgraduate School, 2004); Nicholas DiFonzo, et al., *Rumor Clustering, Consolidation and Confidence: Dynamic Social Impact and Self Organization of Hearsay*, (2010) (unpublished manuscript).

III. THEORY

As asylum seekers travel through the Middle East and into southern Europe, their journey is characterized by high anxiety and uncertainty. Because the path is dangerous and the situation on the ground is rapidly changing, false information can spell the difference between successful arrival and integration or perishing on the way. In addition to word-of-mouth, asylum seekers often rely on smartphones for this information. Indeed, Gillespie et al. report that many refugees consider the smartphone more important than food, shelter, or access to other critical services.⁴⁴ In sum, information is very valuable to refugees, as it allows them to make choices and adapt to policy information more effectively.

In this section, we lay out our central theoretical claim: asylum seekers underutilize legal pathways because they grow to distrust government authorities and aid organizations, and increasingly trust smugglers. We proceed to build a simple informational argument outlining (a) the importance of information about policies and policy shifts in high uncertainty situations, (b) the reasons why asylum seekers develop distrust in official authorities, and (c) the reasons why asylum seekers develop trust in smugglers. Our theory has an important policy implication—that additional attention to how asylum seekers obtain, perceive, and act on information would greatly enhance their ability to effectively exercise fundamental rights.

A. Information About Asylum Laws and Policy Shifts Is Critical to Asylum Seekers

In general, displaced persons seek information about the asylum application process in their host country, the services they receive after claiming asylum, other countries' asylum policies and treatment of asylum seekers, and how the informal use of smugglers compares to the formal asylum application process. When collecting this information, individuals rely on a variety of official and unofficial sources, transmitted through a variety of mediums, whether through poster, by word of mouth, or social media sites.⁴⁵

In the migrant and refugee communities, these policy shifts are accompanied by a flurry of rumors, some credible and some less so. While

⁴⁴ See Marie Gillespie et al., *Mapping Refugee Media Journeys Smartphones and Social Media Networks*, THE OPEN UNIVERSITY (May 12, 2016), http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/sites/www.open.ac.uk/ccig/files/Mapping%20Refugee%20Media%20Journeys%2016%20May%20FIN%20MG_0.pdf.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

not examined in the refugee or humanitarian crisis context, scholars have also demonstrated that marginalized communities use these rumors to determine whether they should access certain services across domains, including economic stability, national security, and public health.⁴⁶ As such, rumor-generating policy shifts can cause significant obstacles to the access of fundamental rights.

B. Problems with Government Sources and Aid Organizations

Generally, migrants seek out and value information from sources that can demonstrate concretely that they are working in their best interest to help them move onward to their intended destination. As explored more extensively below, they will be more likely to perceive such sources as credible and act on their information.

One might think migrants would turn to official sources first. After all, official sources are regulated and vetted for accuracy, while unofficial sources tend to be unregulated and unchecked. However, there are various reasons why migrants and refugees do not trust official sources.

Sometimes, officials simply do not have the information displaced persons want. In the context of humanitarian crises, rapidly-changing conditions on the ground sometimes prevent official sources from being able to provide comprehensive information. Asylum seekers might assume the gaps are left intentionally, even if they are not. Burdensome and frequently changing policies could deepen these suspicions. Additionally, when providing vague, incomplete, or inconsistent information, government officials and aid workers reduce migrants' autonomy and decision-making power, which migrants acutely feel and recognize. Indeed, when government officials implement policy arbitrarily, such as prioritizing particular ethnicities' asylum applications, they can create misleading distinctions between corruption and order and informal markets and government bureaucracies.⁴⁷ Ultimately, this makes migrants and refugees wary of official information because they are afraid that acting on this information will restrict, rather than facilitate, their ability to reach their destination.

Sometimes, officials actively restrict information, intentionally leaving gaps. For example, aid organizations and government officials may actively restrict information about asylum policies to try to dissuade migrants from using smugglers to move onwards and to control population movement throughout the country. Because asylum seekers view information as critical for their survival, when information from official sources is restricted, they

⁴⁶ Julia DeClerque et al., *Rumor, Misinformation and Oral Contraceptive Use in Egypt*, 23 SOC. SCI. & MED. 83 (1986); Rosnow, *supra* note 29.

⁴⁷ See Katharine Young, *Rights and Queues: On Distributive Contests in the Modern State*, 55 Columbia Journal of Transnational Law 1: 65-137 (2016).

often view officials as failing to act in their best interest. This can be counterproductive as it sows deeper mistrust of the asylum application system.

Similarly, refugees may believe inaccurate rumors if they help explain frustrating or unclear phenomena, such as perceived discriminatory group treatment. We suggest that, when government officials and aid workers pursue policies without transparent, consistent information about their actions, diverse asylum seekers, even advantaged ones, might perceive discrimination. We also anticipate that migrants might assume that officials have nefarious intentions because of their previous negative experiences with government officials in their country of origin.⁴⁸ This existing negative perception may extend to NGOs because refugees often perceive aid organizations and host government institutions as synonymous due to their close cooperation.⁴⁹ Unless information is provided in a timely and credible manner, individuals will propagate rumors, particularly those that reflect distrust in national leadership.⁵⁰ This is exacerbated in situations in which policy changes are rapid, nontransparent, and seemingly arbitrary, as in Greece.

Sometimes, the issue is not one of restricting information; instead, being truthful, government bodies may also provide migrants with bad news.⁵¹ As the motivated reasoning literature suggests, individuals are more likely to select information and perceive it as credible if it affirms pre-existing beliefs, prior experiences, and established assumptions about their environment.⁵²

48 See Wendy Pearlman, *Emigration and Power: A Study of Sects in Lebanon, 1860–2010*, 41 POL. & SOC'Y 103 (2013); see also Wendy Pearlman, *Narratives of Fear in Syria*, 14 PERSP. ON POL. 21 (2016).

49 Discussions with refugees in Piraeus and Scaramangas indicated that refugees did not trust the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (“UNHCR”) because UNHCR workers would not tell them anything about the asylum application process, particularly the pre-registration process. These refugees would describe both the government and UNHCR in the same terms, and group their actions together.

50 See Onwook Oh et al., *An Exploration of Social Media in Extreme Events: Rumor Theory and Twitter during the Haiti Earthquake 2010*, ICIS 2010 Proceedings, at 4, 14 (2010).

51 For example, the Greek government and aid organizations telling migrants that the northern border is closed would be ‘bad news.’

52 Milton Lodge & Charles S. Taber, *Three Steps Towards a Theory of Motivated Political Reasoning*, in ELEMENTS OF REASON: COGNITION, CHOICE, AND THE BOUNDS OF RATIONALITY (Arthur Lupia et al. eds., 2000); Milton Lodge & Charles S. Taber, *Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs*, 50 J. AM. POL. SCI. 755 (2006); William Gudykunst, *The Uncertainty Reduction and Anxiety-Uncertainty Reduction Theories of Berger, Gudykunst, and Associates*, in WATERSHED RESEARCH TRADITIONS IN HUMAN COMMUNICATION THEORY 67–100 (Donald P. Cushman & Branislav Kovacic eds., 1995); Yaacov Trope & Akiva Liberman, *Social Hypothesis Testing: Cognitive and Motivational Mechanisms*, in SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: HANDBOOK OF BASIC PRINCIPLES 239–270 (E. Tory Higgins & Arie W. Kruglanski eds., 1996); John T. Jost et al., *Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition*, 129 PSYCHOL. BULL. 339 (2003); Charles G. Lord et al., *Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence*, 37 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 2098 (1979); Constantine Sedikides & Craig A. Anderson, *Causal Explanations of Dejection: A Knowledge Structure Approach*, 18 PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. BULL. 420 (1992); Constantine Sedikides & John J. Skowronski, *The Law of Cognitive Structure Activation*, 2 PSYCHOLOGICAL INQUIRY 169 (1991).

In sum, information is additionally sorted through the lens of motivated reasoning and biased cognition. High-anxiety environments further exacerbate negative perceptions of sources that provide counterintuitive or negative information.

Asylum seekers' engagement with misinformation can affect their decision to access services from their host government and aid organizations. It can lower their willingness to comply with government policies and decrease their interactions with government officials, aid workers, and other migrants. This line of reasoning helps explain why migrants in Greece turn to smugglers so often.

C. The Turn to Smugglers

Sometimes, smugglers might also not have the information migrants want, but unlike governments, smugglers can easily fabricate information. Smugglers are not required to reveal counterintuitive, complicated, or negative news to migrants; they can simply articulate half-truths or avoid discussing unpleasant possibilities and risks. Without the pressures of legality and transparency, they do not activate the types of negative feedback loops or motivated cognition processes, which make migrants wary of governments.

Unlike governments, who might simply not be oriented towards serving refugees, or might actively constrain information, smugglers have incentives to 'serve the customer' with timely and clear information. Unofficial sources can often provide concrete evidence that they, rather than government officials or aid workers, are either successfully facilitating asylum seekers' onward movement, or have successfully moved onwards themselves. To wit, smugglers can point to clear 'records' of successfully moving refugees onwards to their final destinations, while government officials and aid organizations cannot (or will not) do so. Moreover, smugglers have the flexibility to 'customize' their services to increase the likelihood of successful onwards movement in ways that government officials and aid organization workers cannot. For example, in Greece, smugglers often buy their clients European clothing and give them haircuts so that they appear westernized, increasing the likelihood of successfully traveling via airplane to their intended destination.

Most importantly, smugglers have the incentive to provide clear and consistent (mis)information to refugees that encourages them to use their services to move onward informally. This replaces feelings of uncertainty and instability with clear objectives, clear steps toward their intended destination, and clear relationships between themselves and their agents (the smugglers). Moreover, it is likely that asylum seekers will perceive co-ethnics, including family, friends, social media networks, and smugglers, as

more credible than NGOs and government officials because they may place greater trust in co-ethnics.

As we have so far argued, irrespective of whether official sources provide information, migrants collect information to best inform their next move. When information from official sources is deemed incredible or official information is unavailable, individuals will seek out sources that are consistent, clear, and appear to be working in their interest.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Rumors clearly influence migrants' decision to apply for asylum. However, isolating this effect in the 'noise' of a crisis poses significant methodological challenges. In part, this is because rumors often concern sensitive information that government officials, aid organizations, and migrants themselves wish to mask. Host governments may want to conceal that they are violating international and national laws; migrants may want to hide illegal border crossings and other violations. Aid organizations too might circumvent cumbersome national laws and regulations in order to operate more effectively or flexibly. Additionally, vulnerable populations tend to be transient, making them particularly hard to reach and interview. To address these challenges, we designed a mixed-methods research program that combines ethnographic and interview-based research with quantitative data drawn from anonymous online sources (*News that Moves*). This crowd-sourced data, as well as subtle participant observation, offers significant advantages when respondents prefer anonymity. Below, we briefly describe the advantages and limitations of each aspect of our research methodology.

A. Case Selection

Greece provides a compelling case for evaluating the impact of rumors and information access on decisions surrounding the asylum process. A variety of successive regional policy changes, including the introduction of the EU-Turkey deal and the closure of the Greek-FYR Macedonian border in early 2016, provide significant shifts in existing bureaucratic obstacles, push-pull factors, and other key contextual factors. These variations create unique opportunities to identify, isolate, and understand the role of rumors in migrants' decision to exercise legal rights.

While the case of Greece allows us to study the effect of rumors on migrant decision-making, focusing on a single case limits our ability to generalize to other humanitarian crises. Our goal in examining Greece, then, is to highlight the pervasiveness of rumors, and explore how they complicate asylum seekers' exercise of fundamental rights.

B. Content Analysis

To examine rumor content and timing, we draw from Internews' website *News that Moves*, which provides critical information about events happening across the European Union and Turkey. Specifically, Internews produces verified, independent information in the form of articles and explanations specifically for refugees' consumption. These articles provide refugees with a wide variety of information pertaining to the asylum process, refugee camps and their conditions, and even transportation. They also alert refugees to threats and risks, such as border closings. Internews shares verified information from all relevant sources, including humanitarian organizations and government authorities, publishing in Arabic, English, Farsi, and Greek for wide accessibility.

For our content analysis, we leverage *News that Moves*' weekly publication that highlights rumors spreading among the refugee population in Greece, and corrects these rumors by supplanting them with correct information. *News that Moves* collects these rumors through refugee liaison officers and social media officers. Refugee liaison officers work in the field on a daily basis, asking refugees about what they observe and how they survive. By doing so, they receive refugee feedback face-to-face in real-time. Social media officers interact with refugees through Internews' Facebook pages in Arabic and Farsi as well as through the *News that Moves* website. Although social media officers do not collect information from refugees face-to-face, they are able to receive refugee feedback immediately even in situations where Internews does not have access. For example, when the Greek government cleared Idomeni and bused refugees to formal camps, Internews' social media officers were able to receive immediate refugee feedback about how the government was clearing the camp, where the government was sending refugees, and the living conditions in the camps. Once refugee liaisons and social media officers collect these observations, Internews aggregates them in a single database. The organization then identifies trends in the rumors, collects correcting information that 'debunks' each rumor, and publishes them. These weekly reports commenced in January of 2016. Each rumor report contains five selected rumors and their corrective counterparts.

It is important to note that this source, while comprehensive, is systematically biased. For a rumor to be published, it must meet two criteria: 1) whether *News that Moves* can provide a comprehensive answer to the rumor or question at hand; and 2) whether the rumor is politically sensitive by nature. Furthermore, as a humanitarian aid organization whose mandate is to provide vulnerable migrants access to critical information, they have to coordinate with the Greek government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ("UNHCR") to release information that

discourages the practice of hiring smugglers and the use of alternative ways to move onwards.

Despite this bias, these rumors provide a unique wealth of data that captures refugee perceptions of major events, particularly local, regional, and national level policy changes. We coded the rumors in this database systematically, paying particular attention to topics and countries they concerned as well as their frequency of references. We incorporated the full text of frequently repeated rumors in the database and rumors that we encountered in our ethnographic research in Greece. Our intention is to use these full-text samples to illustrate asylum seekers' concerns more concretely.

C. Ethnography and Semi-Structured Interviews

We also conducted extensive interviews and participant observation in Greece with NGO workers, government officials, and vulnerable migrant populations throughout the summer of 2016. This 'ground-truthing' exercise helped ensure validity and accuracy.⁵³ In total, we conducted over eighty-five semi-structured interviews: twenty-five with government employees and aid organization workers⁵⁴ and approximately sixty with refugees (at the individual and family levels).

Geographically, this ethnographic fieldwork included six days in Piraeus, an informal camp; seven days in Scaramangas, a formal camp; and two days in Moria, one of the detention centers where refugees are held on Lesbos. Note that although we used a snowball sampling method,⁵⁵ we tried to address the limitations of this technique by having multiple 'seeds' or starting points. Additionally, due to language constraints, we spoke with mainly Syrian and Iraqi refugees; a minority of those we spoke with were Kurdish families that spoke Arabic. We were able to collect information on the state of Afghan, Pakistani, and Iranian migrants through interactions with refugees, volunteers, and aid organization workers. For a detailed layout of the interviews and how they were conducted, see Appendix A.

53 See A. Post et al., *Crowd-Sourced Data for Comparative Politics: Lessons from Urban India*, (Working Paper, 2015).

54 Ranging from field officers to heads of mission.

55 Snowball sampling requires researchers to initiate interviews with many individuals, called 'seeds,' or 'starting points.' Upon completion of the interview, researchers then ask these individuals to connect them with other potential participants. The researcher continues to do this with each participant, causing the sample to 'snow ball.' See, Rowland Atkinson & John Flint, (2001). *Accessing Hidden and Hard-to-Reach Populations: Snowball Research Strategies*, *Social Research Update*, 33(1), 1–4, (2001).

V. FINDINGS: RUMORS, REFUGEES’ BELIEFS, AND REFUGEES’ ACTIONS

A. Legal and Policy Shifts Trigger Rumors

Shifts in asylum-related policies directly impact how asylum seekers travel to their intended destination country. To evaluate how rumors ‘respond’ to policy changes, we conducted a content analysis of *News that Moves* rumors, tracing the change in rumor content over time. We found that rumors about the Greek asylum application process were very frequent, as were rumors about asylum policies in other European countries. Other prevalent rumors included the governments’ treatment of asylum seekers in Greece and other European countries, as well as services available (formal and informal shelter, transportation, etc.) and how to access them.

We also traced patterns in each rumor type over time. Figure 1 below illustrates how policy implementation shifts led to changes in rumor content. In March 2016, a twin set of policy shifts impacted asylum seekers in Greece: first, FYR Macedonia closed its border with Greece on March 9, 2016, eliminating the main land route used by asylum seekers to move to Northern Europe; second, the EU-Turkey deal, implemented on March 18, 2016 increased the time and difficulty to move. As Figure 1 demonstrates, these March 2016 policy changes directly impacted rumor content, indicating that policy shifts affect the types of information that asylum seekers collect:

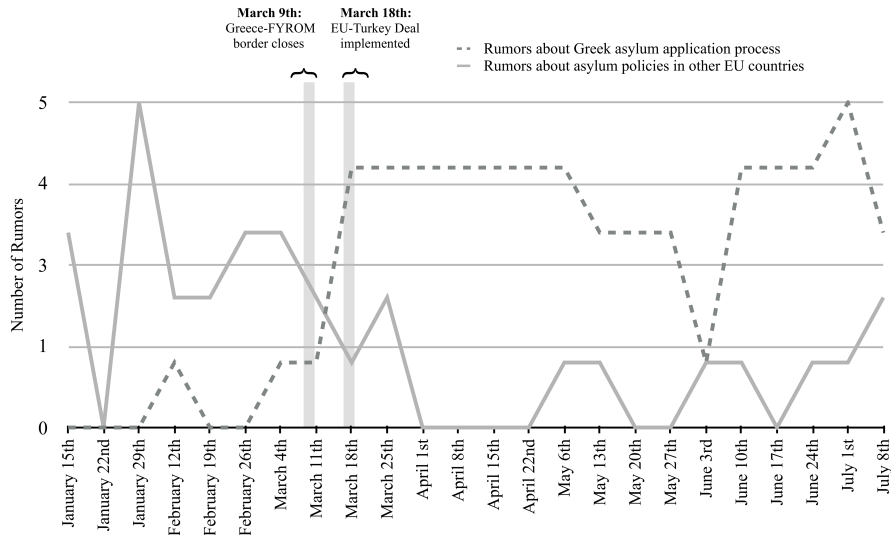


Figure 1: The Effects of Policy Change on Rumor Content

i. Trends in Rumors About EU Countries' Asylum Policies

Prior to these two policy changes, the information most sought out and discussed focused on asylum policies in EU countries outside of Greece. Viewing Greece as a transit country, migrants focused on how to travel through Central Europe to reach Northern Europe. Prevalent rumors about asylum policies in other EU countries focused on possible deportation; for example, “an Afghan refugee was deported from Germany because he showed his passport to the German authorities.”⁵⁶

After these two policy changes, however, information about policies in other EU countries became less important to decision making. Since asylum seekers were no longer anticipating travelling through Central European countries and applying for asylum in their intended destination country, information about these types of policies had limited usefulness. Of the few rumors about refugee policies in other countries that circulated after these policy changes, a majority focused on conditions in either Germany or Sweden, the intended destination countries for many asylum seekers.⁵⁷

ii. Trends in Rumors About Greek Asylum Policies

Trends in rumor content about the Greek asylum application process followed the opposite trend to rumors about asylum policies in other EU countries. Prior to these two policy changes, rumors about the Greek asylum application process were not prevalent; as seen in Figure 1, these types of rumors were basically nonexistent. The pervasive rumors prior to these policy changes focused on the services asylum seekers receive once filing for asylum in Greece,⁵⁸ and where asylum seekers would live if they applied for asylum in Greece.⁵⁹

However, once the land route to Northern Europe was closed and the EU-Turkey deal took effect, as Figure 1 indicates, rumors about Greek asylum policies increased drastically. Many of these pervasive rumors focused on specific aspects of the asylum application process with organizations such as the European Asylum Support Office (“EASO”). For example, a recurring worry among asylum seekers focuses on whether they will be able to complete the asylum application process depending on which

⁵⁶ #3 NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Jan. 29, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-3/>.

⁵⁷ #21: *Reunification, Camps & Vulnerable Persons*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (June 10, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-reunification-camps-vulnerable-persons/>.

⁵⁸ #5: *Fingerprints, Living in Germany & Protecting Your Belongings*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Feb. 12, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-fingerprints-living-in-germany-protecting-your-belongings/>.

⁵⁹ #8: *Asylum in Greece, Passport Checks & 30-day Stamps*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Mar. 4, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-asylum-in-greece-passport-checks-30-day-stamps/>.

Greek city they currently reside in, evident by the rumor that “People who had a scheduled EASO meeting and who have been moved from Lesbos to Kavala will be unable to do their interview via Skype.”⁶⁰

These trends in rumor content indicate that information sought by migrants directly correlates to policy changes that impact their ability to move onward. While the types of information collected changes in response to the political climate, whether asylum seekers perceive this information as credible, and act on it, depends on various other factors. These factors are explored in the section below.

B. Refugees Develop Distrust in Government and Aid Authorities

In high-anxiety environments, asylum seekers may fall back on cognitive biases to sort through information and determine source credibility. Drawing from ethnographic evidence collected in Greece and common rumors from *News that Moves*, we show that, when government officials and aid workers do not provide clear and consistent information to asylum seekers about policy changes, asylum seekers’ perceptions of government officials and aid workers as credible and trustworthy sources decreases. We show that, as asylum seekers’ perceptions of government officials and aid workers become more negative, they disengage with government officials and aid workers, and are less willing to use formal processes to move onwards.

i. The Greek Asylum Center’s Frequently Changing Implementation of Asylum Procedures

After the closure of the Greek-FYR Macedonian border and the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal, the Greek government changed how asylum seekers initiate the asylum application process, called pre-registration, three times in the period of five months. When someone pre-registers, they indicate their intent to apply for asylum as well as whether they want to stay in Greece or be relocated elsewhere. Figure 2 outlines the changes made to the pre-registration process during this time period.

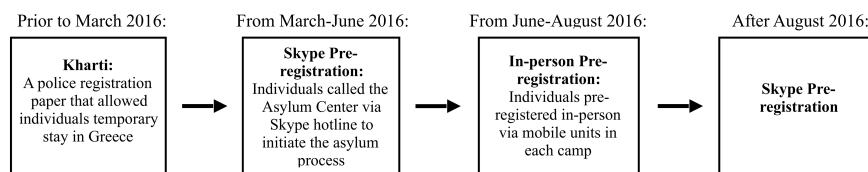


Figure 2: Changes in the Greek Asylum Application Process

⁶⁰ #11: *Resettlement in Canada, Family Reunification & EU-Turkey Deal*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Mar. 25, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-resettlement-in-canada-family-reunification-eu-turkey-deal/>.

The Greek Asylum Center frequently changed the pre-registration process in attempts to alleviate problems that arose with each new system developed. Initially, the Greek government issued *khartia*, a temporary residency permit, which facilitated asylum seekers' movement through Greece and onward to Northern Europe. However, after the closure of the Greek-FYR Macedonian border, the *kharti* became a significant obstacle for asylum seekers because its duration was very short. Indicatively, Syrians' *khartia* expired after six months, but Afghans' *khartia* expired after just one month.⁶¹ The second pre-registration system, the Skype hotline, also backfired: since the Skype hotline was only open for several hours per week, thousands of migrants would call at once, creating a massive bottleneck.⁶² The third system, in-person pre-registration, resulted in 20,000 of the 60,000 asylum seekers' pre-registration, but was shut down due to security concerns. 1,500 Pakistani men gathered at Scaramangas camp demanding to be pre-registered, since Pakistanis were only allowed to pre-register through Skype.⁶³ The Asylum center re-opened the Skype hotline in mid-August.⁶⁴

During this same five-month period, the Asylum Center changed the nature of the appeals process for rejected claims. Until June 2016, the appeals committee, which consisted of three representatives appointed by UNHCR and the National Commission for Human Rights, granted appeals at high rates.⁶⁵ In fact, lawyers said that nearly all those who appealed had their decisions overturned. The high rate of successful appeals led the Greek government to pass a law in June 2016 that required that the Appeals committee consist of two government-appointed judges and one UNHCR appointed representative.⁶⁶ Aid workers expressed concerns about this reshuffling, worried that the appeals committee was no longer

61 Conversely, Syrian refugees were allowed six months to legally stay in Greece.

62 For example, during pre-registration interviews, the Asylum Center often processed Syrian refugees' applications before any other migrants' application because they had established grounds for relocation. Moreover, the rumor that Greek government officials were more likely to find that Afghans had credible asylum claims influenced Pakistanis (and other ethnicities) to pretend to be Afghan during the asylum determination. Interview with aid organization worker 3, in Attica, Greece (June 6, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 4, in Attica, Greece (June 6, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 17; Interview with aid organization worker 18, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 21, in Attica, Greece (June 26, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 22, in Attica, Greece (June 26, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 23, in Lesbos, Greece (June 27, 2016).

63 Discussions with aid workers in Scaramangas Camp.

64 End of Large Scale Pre-Registration on Mainland Greece (Aug. 1, 2016), <http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/EN-01.08.2016-Press-Release-end-pre-registration.pdf>.

65 Interview with aid organization worker 20, in Greece (June 26, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

66 Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

independent.⁶⁷ Significant backlogs in the appeals process exacerbated negative perceptions of the appeals committee.⁶⁸

In addition to changes in asylum policy, there are several critical ‘gaps’ between formal refugee policy and on-the-ground implementation. For example, by law, the Greek government is supposed to provide free legal counsel to migrants going through the appeals process.⁶⁹ However, it currently fails to do so.⁷⁰

These policy ‘gaps’ often take the form of unclear division of responsibility among the national and regional government organizations. Interviews with legal experts indicated that the Asylum Center is not involved in the determination of asylum claims on the islands. In fact, lawyers stated that, despite the fact that EASO is an EU body and is thus only supposed to provide support to the Asylum Center, it is often completely responsible for evaluating whether migrants can be sent back to Turkey and if they have a valid, sufficient asylum claim.⁷¹ Lawyers also believed that EASO decision-making during the fast-track process tends to be arbitrary. EASO officials, rather than accept the official vulnerability card, rely on a de facto procedure to determine vulnerability: if an EASO official cannot visibly see the vulnerability, EASO will deny the claim.⁷² This de facto procedure can prevent individuals who have experienced rape, torture, and other ‘invisible’ vulnerabilities from receiving special assistance.

C. *Lack of Consistent, Clear, Official Information Available to Asylum Seekers*

Throughout the implementation of current and newly-developed asylum policies, the Asylum Center does not provide information about why they were making these changes, or how these changes would impact migrants’ ability to move onward. We detail these ambiguities and their consequences below.

First, government officials and UNHCR strategically restricted critical information about the in-person pre-registration process to control

⁶⁷ Interview with aid organization worker 18, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

⁶⁸ Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

⁶⁹ Interview with aid organization worker 13, in Attica, Greece (June 17, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, in Greece (June 26, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 25, in Attica, Greece (July 1, 2016).

⁷⁰ Interview with aid organization worker 13, *supra* note 69; Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 25, *supra* note 69.

⁷¹ Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

⁷² Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

refugees' movement throughout the country.⁷³ By restricting this information, officials hoped they would prevent refugees from traveling en masse to the formal camp, where preregistration was currently taking place, to pre-register more quickly.⁷⁴ Despite these efforts, several refugees living in Scaramangas said they had friends or relatives who, upon hearing rumors that the mobile unit was currently in Eleonas camp, had successfully pre-registered there.⁷⁵ Greek government and UNHCR officials also withheld information about the asylum process to induce refugees to stay in Greece. Government and UNHCR officials refused to give refugees the date of their first asylum appointment during the pre-registration process because they feared that, if refugees knew that their first asylum appointments would not occur for at least five months, refugees would opt to leave through smugglers and/or mobilize and protest, potentially inciting violence.⁷⁶ They instructed volunteers to tell refugees that they did not know the length of the asylum process, which can take anywhere from six months to a year.⁷⁷

Second, the Asylum Center failed to provide information about the required steps of the asylum application process. Migrants must attend two appointments with the Asylum Center in Athens before obtaining asylum seeker status.⁷⁸ While the exact function of each of these appointments is unclear, a claim to asylum can be denied at each step.⁷⁹ Requiring migrants to attend two interviews increases the difficulty with which they can complete the application process because they are unable to secure transportation to multiple appointments.⁸⁰ Many migrants are hesitant to move to formal camps outside the capital for the same reason.⁸¹

Third, government officials neither provide migrants with information regarding the rights they receive during the asylum process nor do they inform them of how to access these rights. Migrants who were pre-registered through the in-person system received a provisional asylum card

⁷³ Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62.

⁷⁴ Discussions with aid workers in Scaramangas Camp.

⁷⁵ This was also supported by discussions with volunteers and aid organization workers in Scaramangas.

⁷⁶ Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

⁷⁷ Supported by discussions with aid organizations workers and volunteers in Piraeus and Scaramangas.

⁷⁸ Interview with aid organization worker 11, in Attica, Greece (June 13, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 13, *supra* note 69.

⁷⁹ Interview with aid organization worker 11, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 13, *supra* note 69; Interview with aid organization worker 18, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

⁸⁰ Interview with aid organization worker 11, *supra* note 62.

⁸¹ Supported by the discussions during the June 17 and July 1 Victoria Coordination Meetings.

that allowed them one year of legal residence in Greece.⁸² Despite possessing an asylum card, pre-registered migrants' applications remain pending until they attend their first appointment.⁸³ Migrants were largely unaware that pre-registration was technically not part of the asylum process, and they would not be able to access these rights until their initial interview.⁸⁴ We must note that migrants' ability to access legal information is critical during the application and appeals process.⁸⁵ Lawyers can help them prepare for each interview and attend to ensure that all procedures are followed.⁸⁶ Frequently, lawyers also play a crucial role in the appeals process.⁸⁷

i. Effect on Asylum Seekers' Perceptions and Behavior

The Asylum Center's ambiguous implementation process decreased government credibility substantially. Frequent changes in the pre-registration process increased asylum seekers' confusion. For example, during the in-person pre-registration process, the Asylum Center first distributed wristbands to refugees, which had the date and time of their pre-registration appointment in the following week. Since this procedure was not communicated clearly to asylum seekers, many were unsure whether the date and time on their wristbands were for their first asylum application appointment or pre-registration. This confusion is evident through the pervasive rumors that "[t]hose with the wristbands are only eligible for asylum in Greece,"⁸⁸ and that "you either accept asylum in Greece or you will be deported back to the country of origin."⁸⁹ This difference matters because important protections depend on the time of the asylum application.

82 Interview with aid organization worker 15, in Attica, Greece (June 20, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 25, *supra* note 69.

83 Interview with aid organization worker 15, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62.

84 Supported by discussions with refugees in Scaramangas.

85 Of the four lawyers whom we spoke with, all agreed that migrants need legal counseling to navigate the appeals process — many emphasized that, because the appeals process is so complex, legal advice was critical for a successful appeal.

86 Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

87 Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

88 #32: *Pre-registration, Relocation & Deportations*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Aug. 26, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-pre-registration-relocation-deportations/>.

89 #38: *Asylum, Relocation & Closed Borders*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Oct. 7, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-asylum-relocation-closed-borders/>.

Similarly, rumors indicate a high level of confusion about legal rights. Some believed that “when you register via Skype, you immediately get housing and a money card;”⁹⁰ others remained uncertain of this.⁹¹ In addition to material aid, asylum seekers were unclear whether they would be able to exercise their legal rights, evident by the rumor that “they told us that even if we apply for asylum in Greece, we can’t work here as Afghans,”⁹² and “after they accept you as a refugee, they will give you an ID card where it is written that you are a refugee and you can’t go anywhere with it [outside of Greece]...[y]ou need travel documents that will cost 800 euro to be issued.”⁹³ Moreover, migrants remain uncertain about options for legal movement.

Confusion increases skepticism of officials’ motives and perceptions of biased policy implementation. Despite migrants’ relocation through the formal process, many believe that the relocation program is a lie: “they use it to calm us down and slowly get rid of us by sending us to camps in nowhere, where we will be forgotten, unlike here with all the media.”⁹⁴ This skepticism has led many to believe that the process is biased. Common beliefs about the process include “if you know how to speak English, that is a positive thing for your asylum claim,”⁹⁵ and “many organizations have the ability to intervene with the processing time of the applications. Everything is related to your connections, and the language plays a major role.”⁹⁶

Uncertainty and distrust of official sources, as well as lack of confidence in the asylum application process itself, has led asylum seekers to selectively engage in certain parts of the asylum process. For example, they might seek out legal loopholes in family reunification procedures as well as in the EU-Turkey agreement. One NGO employee recounted a narrative of arranged marriage for access to Germany.⁹⁷ Additionally, discussions in Piraeus and Scaramangas indicated that many families leverage a different loophole in family reunification: when Germany temporarily suspended some aspects of

90 #28: *Accommodation, borders & Relocation*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (July 29, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-accommodation-borders-relocation/>.

91 #30: *Relocation, Money & Accommodation*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Aug. 12, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-relocation-money-accommodation/>.

92 #48: *Fingerprints, Borders & Work In Greece*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Dec. 16, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-48-fingerprints-borders-work-in-greece/>.

93 #44: *Relocation, US & Travelling*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Nov. 18, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-44-relocation-us-travelling/>.

94 #15: *Deportations to Turkey, Relocation & Portugal*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Apr. 22, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-deportations-to-turkey-relocation-portugal/>.

95 #26: *Asylum, Returns & Camps*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (July 18, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-asylum-returns-camps/>.

96 #40: *Vulnerable People, Skype & Relocation*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Oct. 21, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-40-vulnerable-people-skype-relocation/>.

97 Interview with aid organization worker 23, *supra* note 62.

the Dublin convention, many families chose to split up, with one member using informal means to reach Germany and apply for asylum there, while the rest remain in Greece and apply for reunification.

Lack of information about the asylum application process also generated perceptions of ethnic discrimination. Because Syrians receive relatively quick asylum application processing times and have access to better facilities, Afghans find a broad range of government and aid organization policies discriminatory.⁹⁸ In interviews, they reported that Syrian refugees receive preferential treatment from volunteers, and that they have issues getting food during meal distributions because Syrian refugees push them out of the lines.⁹⁹ Additionally, they reported inadequate access to legal rights relative to Syrians due to a shortage of Farsi relative to Arabic translators.

At the same time, frequently changing and poorly communicated policies can also lead advantaged groups to perceive they are being discriminated against as well. During discussions with Syrian refugees in Moria Detention Center, they claimed that only Afghans and Pakistanis were allowed to live in the family living quarters, a secured building with electricity, when in fact a majority of families living there were Syrian.

Moreover, even when the government provides popular services to migrants, these negative feedback loops lead them to believe that the services are placed there to further restrict their rights. For example, after the Greek government began to provide free Wi-Fi access in the formal camps, a rumor emerged that “The wifi in the camp is really weak and that is on purpose, because they do not want people to be in contact with outside world (including smugglers).”¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, confusion and uncertainty about changes in and implementation of official policies breeds distrust of government officials and aid workers; this leads asylum seekers to increasingly perceive all official policies negatively as well as disengage with government officials and selectively engage with the asylum application process.

⁹⁸ Supported by the discussions with volunteers and aid organization workers in Piraeus and Scaramangas.

⁹⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰⁰ #26: *Asylum, Returns & Camps*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (July 18, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-asylum-returns-camps/>.

D. Refugees Turn to Smugglers

i. Smugglers' Services

Migrants have several ways to informally leave Greece, including smuggling by plane, smuggling over the land border into Albania,¹⁰¹ smuggling on a ferry into Italy, and using GPS on smartphones to walk across the Greek border, among others.¹⁰² For vulnerable migrants who possess the money, they can pay anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 euro for a fake passport and plane ticket.¹⁰³ Various available smuggling routes change over time, often in response to shifts in national and regional asylum policies. For example, once Greece's northern land borders were sealed in March 2016, longer, riskier, and more expensive routes developed.

In addition to offering various types of passage, smugglers provide migrants the opportunity to regulate their passage via rudimentary customer service procedures. For example, en route from Turkey to Greece or to Northern Europe, some migrants were able to delay payment to smugglers until they safely reached their destination. Alternatively, smugglers often allowed migrants to give their boat fare to a relative in Turkey, who would then pay the smuggler when safe passage was confirmed.¹⁰⁴ Smugglers who facilitate air travel often buy migrants clothes and haircuts to make them appear more European, increasing the chance of successful passage. By creating these services, smugglers appear to reduce the gamble that migrants must make.¹⁰⁵ While the asylum application process is perceived as abstract and uncertain, smuggling appears to be a concrete transaction.

Smugglers are also incentivized to provide information to entice individuals to use their services. Often, this information is fabricated or

101 Interview with Greek government official 9, in Attica, Greece (June 13, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 13, *supra* note 69; Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18.

102 Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 20, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62.

103 Interview with aid Greek government official 9, *supra* note 86; Interview with aid organization worker 13, *supra* note 69; Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62; Also supported by discussions with volunteers and aid organization workers in Piraeus and Scaramangas.

104 Interview with Greek government aid official 9, *supra* note 86; Interview with aid organization worker 13, *supra* note 69; Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62; Also supported by discussions with volunteers and aid organization workers in Piraeus and Scaramangas.

105 Interview with Greek government aid official 9, *supra* note 86; Interview with aid organization worker 13, *supra* note 69; Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Sally Engle Merry, *Anthropology and the Study of Alternative Dispute Resolution*, 34 J. LEGAL EDUC. 277 (1984); Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 61; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62; Also supported by discussions with volunteers and aid organization workers in Piraeus and Scaramangas.

biased, aimed at making asylum seekers perceive smuggling as a more viable pathway. They tend to provide information that confirms asylum seekers' hopes or preconceived notions of the Greek government and its policies. Following the Greek-FYR Macedonian border closure, over eight thousand asylum seekers remained in Idomeni, an informal camp with particularly poor living conditions, for over six months, despite efforts by Greek, EU, and other authorities to provide concrete information. These individuals acted on competing information provided by smugglers and volunteers that the borders would open soon, allowing them to move on informally to Northern Europe.¹⁰⁶

ii. Refugee Perceptions of Smugglers and Willingness to Leave Greece Informally

Migrants' trust in organizations and government bodies is highly correlated with whether that particular institution can directly answer their questions and provide them concrete information about the asylum application process.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, migrants we interviewed across informal and formal camps repeatedly connected trust in institutions with information provision and information consistency.

Moreover, the nature of the power differential between the rumor source and recipient impacts perceptions of credibility and trust.¹⁰⁸ The power differential between smugglers and migrants is less stark than between migrants and government officials. Smugglers are often successful migrants themselves; moreover, they tend to be Moroccan, Albanian, Iraqi, or Afghan, meaning that they possibly speak the same language or share the same ethnic background and experiences.¹⁰⁹ Conversely, the linguistic barriers between migrants and Greek officials exacerbate the existing power differential by preventing each from reaching a shared understanding of migrants' needs.

Asylum seekers' perception that using smugglers is a more viable way to move onward successfully is evident in recurring rumors. Even during the in-person pre-registration exercise, rumors that demonstrated migrants weighing the costs and benefits of smugglers were pervasive. For example, migrants widely believed that "if you make it through one of the neighbor countries, even if you are detained, the chance of relocation to better

¹⁰⁶ Interview with aid organization worker 6, in Attica, Greece (June 8, 2016); Interview with aid organization worker 15, *supra* note 65; Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18; Interview with aid organization worker 21, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 22, *supra* note 62; Interview with aid organization worker 24, in Attica, Greece (June 30, 2016).

¹⁰⁷ Drawn from discussions with refugees in Scaramangas. Refugees often said that they did not trust UNHCR because they could never tell them the correct information, or they did not know what the correct information was.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with aid Greek government official 9, *supra* note 87; Interview with aid organization worker 16, *supra* note 18.

countries like Germany is higher.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, asylum seekers believed that “if you reach Serbia before March 2017 and register in a camp, they cannot deport you to Greece.”¹¹¹

After the uncertainty of the pre-registration process, asylum seekers began to see smuggling as a tool to help them along through the formal legal process. They widely believed that using smuggling from the islands to Athens would allow them to apply for asylum without deportation¹¹² and that, if Syrians used smugglers to reach France and showed French authorities their protection cards and IDs, they would be accepted.¹¹³ Most critically, asylum seekers began to believe that smuggling was, in fact, not smuggling, but using ‘friends’ to leave the country. As recently as December 2016, asylum seekers were saying that “there are some interpreters in camp who sometimes help us to fly [pass the borders]. They are not smugglers but they have some friends and its not true to say they are smuggling. They just help us.”¹¹⁴ Ultimately, in the absence of timely and consistent official information, asylum seekers draw on information provided by smugglers; because this information is consistent and concrete, asylum seekers are more likely to perceive it as trustworthy and credible, increasing the likelihood that they will use smugglers’ services to move onwards.

VI. CONCLUSION

The migrant crisis in Europe has exposed many weaknesses in the modern refugee regime. Informal information networks and smugglers are currently filling the gaps. By turning to informal pathways, displaced persons are taking risks that compromise their access to critical resources as well as their physical safety.

We explain the gap between formal protections and actual rights access by highlighting the effects of misinformation. Limited and poorly communicated information fosters mistrust between displaced persons and their host states. In turn, they seek alternative information sources to complete their journey. The current literature on migrants fails to acknowledge the importance of clear, timely, and consistent information to the functioning of the asylum process. When you ask refugees directly about

110 #25: *Relocation, Reunification & Work*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (July 8, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-relocation-reunification-work/>.

111 #50: *Relocation, passports & Serbia*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Dec. 30, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-50-relocation-passports-serbia/>.

112 #46: *Smugglers, Borders & Headscarf*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Dec. 2, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-46-smugglers-borders-headscarf/>.

113 #26: *Asylum, Returns & Camps*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (July 18, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-asylum-returns-camps/>.

114 #43: *Canada, Smugglers & Fingerprints*, NEWS THAT MOVES: RUMOURS (Nov. 11, 2016), <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rumours-43-canada-smugglers-fingerprints/>.

their needs, what they seem to want most is information, credible signals that maintain transparency between refugee and host state. However, the existing regime does not fully recognize displaced persons as active consumers of information.

Ultimately, we demonstrate that information access directly influences migrants' and refugees' decision to exercise their legal rights. We collect data through anonymous rumor databases as well as through interviews and ethnographic work to support this claim. Our objective is to highlight the importance of incorporating the right to information into the European refugee regime, so that displaced persons do not continue to discredit government sources and NGOs as unhelpful, self-interested, and biased.

VII. APPENDIX A: ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA COLLECTION

In the sections below, we describe the two main aspects of our ethnographic data collection: semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant observation.¹¹⁵ As elaborated more extensively below, we collected data in Attica (the broadest region in Greece, where roughly 40% of the population live) and Lesbos. We chose to report our data collection strategies this way in order to maximize transparency, while maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of interview participants and individuals observed. It is critical to maintain participants' confidentiality and anonymity because the issues discussed in these interviews and discussions are politically sensitive, and participants could face retribution if they are connected to the findings of this study. Melissa Carlson, the first author, collected the data in their entirety.

I. Semi-Structured, In-depth Interviews

Carlson conducted a total of twenty-five interviews. There were two different types of individuals she interviewed: Greek government officials, and international and national aid organization workers. She divided interviewees into these two categories because she anticipated that they had different sources of information as well as different experiences with vulnerable migrants, and thus varying perspectives of how and why vulnerable migrants exercise their legal rights. Below, she lists how many individuals from each category she interviewed, the date of the interview, and provides interesting characteristics about the group of interviewees as a whole. She provides aggregate, rather than individual, characteristics of the interviewees in order to minimize potential breach of confidentiality.

¹¹⁵ Since Melissa Carlson conducted the fieldwork described below, the rest of the appendix refers to data collection in third person.

A. Greek Government Officials

Carlson interviewed four total government officials. Of these four, three were government doctors and involved in the health sector in some capacity; one was involved in the government's efforts to combat smuggling and human trafficking. Three of the interviewees were members of the military.

| <u>Interview No.</u> | <u>Date of Interview</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Interview 1 | June 3, 2016 |
| Interview 2 | June 3, 2016 |
| Interview 7 | June 9, 2016 |
| Interview 9 | June 13, 2016 |

B. International and National Aid Organization Workers

Carlson interviewed workers employed at both national and international aid organizations engaged in the refugee crisis. These workers were engaged in various different types of service provision, ranging from protection and health to education, shelter, and food distribution. Of these interviews, four were conducted with lawyers who work with organizations that provide legal aid to refugees, or who work in protection. Nine interviewees focused on strengthening communication with vulnerable migrant communities in some capacity.

| <u>Interview No.</u> | <u>Date of Interview</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Interview 3 | June 6, 2016 |
| Interview 4 | June 6, 2016 |
| Interview 5 | June 6, 2016 |
| Interview 6 | June 8, 2016 |
| Interview 8 | June 10, 2016 |
| Interview 10 | June 13, 2016 |
| Interview 11 | June 13, 2016 |
| Interview 12 | June 13, 2016 |
| Interview 13 | June 17, 2016 |
| Interview 14 | June 17, 2016 |
| Interview 15 | June 20, 2016 |
| Interview 16 | June 20, 2016 |
| Interview 17 | June 20, 2016 |
| Interview 18 | June 24, 2016 |
| Interview 19 | June 24, 2016 |
| Interview 20 | June 24, 2016 |
| Interview 21 | June 26, 2016 |

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Interview 22 | June 26, 2016 |
| Interview 23 | June 27, 2016 |
| Interview 24 | June 30, 2016 |
| Interview 25 | July 1, 2016 |

C. Participant Observation

As seen below, Carlson conducted participant observation in two different settings: formal and informal refugee camps¹¹⁶ and aid organization coordination meetings. Carlson chose to conduct participant observation in these two settings because it would allow her to (1) observe refugees' desire and ability to access their rights, as well as how they went about exercising their rights, in real time; and (2) understand how aid organizations communicate and spread information to refugees, as well as ascertain refugees' perception of aid organizations and the government as credible sources of information. Collectively, participant observation in these two settings allowed her to understand both aid organization and refugees' perspectives and engagement with information access.

Carlson accessed formal and informal refugee camps as a volunteer Arabic translator. Throughout the course of translating, Carlson spoke with refugees, volunteers from formal volunteer groups, and workers from aid organizations. She was able to observe interactions between refugees, aid workers, and the military/police personnel managing the camps. In the sections below, Carlson list the days she visited each camp and the specific volunteer activity she performed that day. When Carlson made camp visits, she was generally volunteering in that camp between four to eight hours per day. She also outlined how many individuals she spoke with, on average. While Carlson had a variety of different verbal and non-verbal interactions, the instances she included were substantive conversations that usually lasted anywhere from fifteen to forty-five minutes. These discussions generally focused on refugees' experiences, intentions, and how they accessed information.

The Victoria coordination meetings were attended by representatives from aid organizations currently providing services to urban refugees living in Victoria, Omonia, and Exarchia (areas of Athens). In these meetings, aid organization workers would discuss current challenges to program implementation, interactions with the government, communicating important information to beneficiaries, and identifying the informal and formal living situations of refugees in urban areas. Carlson also attended a volunteer coordination meeting in Scaramangas, which covered similar topics, but specific to that refugee camp. Carlson recorded the topics that were discussed and what was said.

¹¹⁶ Formal refugee camps are those established and managed by the Greek government. Conversely, informal refugee camps are neither established nor managed by the Greek government.

Piraeus, Informal Refugee Camp at the Port of Attica

| <u>Date of Camp Visit</u> | <u>Volunteer Work Performed</u> |
|---------------------------|--|
| June 4, 2016 | Translator for volunteers; distributed meals |
| June 5, 2016 | Translator for volunteers; distributed meals |
| June 7, 2016 | Translator for volunteers; distributed meals |
| June 9, 2016 | Translator for volunteers; distributed meals |
| June 15, 2016 | Distributed meals |

Carlson spoke with an average of 3 refugees per day: 15 total discussions.

Carlson spoke with an average of 4 volunteers/aid organization workers per day: 20 total discussions.

Scaramangas, Formal Camp run by Military in Attica

| <u>Date of Camp Visit</u> | <u>Volunteer Work Performed</u> |
|---------------------------|--|
| June 14, 2016 | Translator for Danish Refugee Council (DRC) camp census/survey |
| June 15, 2016 | Translator for DRC camp census/survey |
| June 16, 2016 | Translator for DRC camp census/survey |
| June 21, 2016 | Translator for DRC camp census/survey |
| June 22, 2016 | Translator for DRC camp census/survey; attended coordination meeting |
| June 23, 2016 | Translator for DRC camp census/survey |

Carlson spoke with an average of 5 caravans of refugees per day; average of 2 adults spoken with per caravan: 60 total discussions.

Carlson spoke with an average of 7 volunteers/aid organization workers per day: 42 total.

Moria, Detention Center on Lesbos (Greek Island)

| <u>Date of Camp Visit</u> | <u>Volunteer Work Performed</u> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| June 27, 2016 | Visited with aid organization worker |
| June 28, 2016 | Translator for journalist |

Carlson interviewed 1 aid organization worker on June 27 in Moria.

Carlson interviewed 8 refugees on June 28th.

| <u>Date of Victoria Coordination Meetings</u> | <u>Nature of Participation</u> |
|---|---|
| June 10, 2016 | Attendee, representative of Melissa Network |
| June 17, 2016 | Attendee, representative of Melissa Network |
| July 1, 2016 | Attendee, representative of Melissa Network |

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